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ABSTRACT

Volunteering is often seen as an essential element in active citizenship and community participation, and existing literature suggests that those who volunteer young are more likely to volunteer through later stages of life. Analysis of Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), which identified factors that contribute to volunteering for Australian school students between 16-20, found that the following four variables that significantly contributed to volunteering activity: (1) gender girls spend more time volunteering than boys; (2) socioeconomic status higher socioeconomic groups are more socially engaged and access public knowledge through print media more frequently than those of lower socioeconomic groups; (3) home language respondents' whose mothers were born in non-English speaking countries volunteered less; and (4) size of home community those from non-metropolitan communities volunteered more than those from metropolitan communities. In addition, those who remained in school volunteered more than those who left school, and boys were more likely to volunteer if they were pessimistic about their futures while girls were more likely to volunteer if they were optimistic about theirs. Suggestions for future research include determining why young people begin and continue to volunteer, and whether the rising number of hours in paid employment by young people has an impact on the propensity to volunteer. (Contains 7 tables, 3 figures, and 17 references.) (MO)

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Research Report Number 32

Active Citizenship and the Secondary School Experience:

Community Participation Rates of Australian Youth

Kevin Brown
Carla Lipsig-Mumme
Grazyna Zajdow

July 2003

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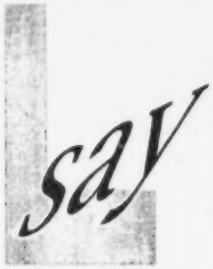

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

Research Report Number 32

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION RATES OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

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This report forms part of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth: a research program that is jointly managed by ACER and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

The project has been funded by the DEST LSAY Analysis Grants Scheme. The Scheme aims to widen the use of LSAY data amongst researchers and encourage new approaches to using the data to address policy issues.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Department of Education, Science and Training or the Australian Council for Educational Research.

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Contents

Tables iv
Figures iv
Executive Summary v

1 INTRODUCTION 1
Is Volunteering Important? 1
Keywords 1
International Findings and Australian Research 3
Who volunteers? 4
Gender matters 4
Does socioeconomic status matter? 4
The social context of volunteering 5
The role of secondary schools 5

2 DATA, METHODS AND FINDINGS 6
Volunteering from 16 to 20 years old 6
Do schools matter? 11
Is the choice to volunteer instrumental or altruistic? 12

3 CONCLUSION 13
Future research 14

APPENDIX 1 Development of the Public Knowledge Scale (PKS) 15
APPENDIX 2 Pathways to volunteering 17
REFERENCES 20

Tables

Table 1 Percentages of each age group undertaking each volunteering activity 7

Table 2 Percentages of each age group undertaking at least one volunteering activity 8

Table 3 Percentages of males and females who were volunteers by age category.....8

Table 4 Percentages of volunteers from English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds by age category 9

Table 5 Percentages of volunteers from each region by age category 10

Table 6 Correlation matrix of variables to be submitted to PCA for the PKS 15

Table 7 Component loadings on the one-component Public Knowledge Scale.....16

Figures

Figure 1 Percentages of volunteers within each SES category 9

Figure 2 Hypothesized causal model of volunteering activity in 1999 and 2000.....18

Figure 3 Final model of volunteering activity in 1999 and 2000 with beta weights and squared multiple correlations.....19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The central issue this project seeks to address is the relationship between volunteering, active citizenship and community participation for young Australians. We have focused on this because we believe that volunteering is an essential element in active citizenship. Of long term significance is the fact that international research indicates that those who begin volunteering young are most likely to continue volunteering through later stages of life: volunteering is a habit learned early. But surprisingly, there are few studies, in Australia or elsewhere, which look at the volunteering patterns of youth younger than 18 years old. The literature that does exist strongly suggests that the habit of volunteering develops at an early age.

Our study used three surveys from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) project. LSAY contains several cohorts of Australian school students that are followed through school and into post-secondary education and the labour market. Our main aim was to identify factors that contribute to volunteering activities for two LSAY groups: the 1995 Year 9 cohort, and the 1998 Year 9 cohort.

Three different forms of analysis were undertaken, univariate, bivariate and multivariate. This was necessary because of the different cohort groups and different sets of questionnaires. Longitudinal, multivariate analysis was undertaken on the 1995 Year 9 cohort group over the years 1999 and 2000. A younger cohort (1998 Year 9 group) was also analysed but a multivariate analysis was unable to be used. Even with these limitations, our data produced viable comparisons between various ages.

Is volunteering important?

The project aims to clarify those aspects of the relationship between students' demographic and school background variables, and active citizenship (defined by volunteering), which were conducive to greater participation. The authors considered a number of variables including gender, ethnicity, reading and writing achievement, socioeconomic status and place of residence. These were administered as part of the initial data collection and not gathered in the follow-up questionnaires. We found that all of these variables impacted on the propensity to volunteer and the amount of time spent in volunteering. A secondary concern of the project was to devise a **'Public Knowledge' Scale** to identify types of activities which contribute to the public awareness of young people, such as participation in cultural activities and access to the media, and relate these to the other variables and volunteering activities.

The study found that four variables significantly contributed to volunteering activity: gender, socioeconomic status, home language and size of home community. **More than 50 per cent of cases were correctly predicted using these four variables for the cohorts.**

Gender emerges as a powerful predictive variable. Girls spent more time volunteering than boys. In addition, girls volunteered more often if they were optimistic about their future prospects, while boys volunteered more often if they were pessimistic about the future. Girls were also more likely to volunteer if their mothers worked outside the home. This difference did not hold for boys. Girls and boys varied again on the relation between their public knowledge and their propensity to volunteer: the greater the access to public

knowledge, the more girls volunteered, and spent more time in volunteering. This was not the case for boys. Finally, girls who volunteered increased the amount of time they spent volunteering after they left secondary school, whether they went on to further study or not. Boys, in contrast, decreased their volunteering after their secondary studies.

In addition to gender, **the social engagement and location of young people and their families** impacted on volunteering. For both genders, propensity to volunteer increased if the father was employed. Boys and girls from non-metropolitan communities volunteered more (more frequently and more hours) than youth from metropolitan communities, replicating an Australian pattern for all age groups.

How important is public knowledge? If active citizenship is dependent on young people's ability and desire to access public knowledge, then there are some structural variables which affect these outcomes. We found accessing public knowledge to be both an important component of volunteering, and a reflection of students' social location. The higher the socioeconomic level, the higher the score on accessing print media, a crucial component of access to public knowledge. The higher the SES, the more frequently respondents access public knowledge through cultural activities. Finally, the country of birth of the respondent's mother affected the frequency with which respondents access public knowledge through the print media. Those with English-speaking mothers born overseas had a higher print media score than those whose mothers were born in Australia, who in turn had a higher score than those with mothers born overseas from non-English speaking countries.

Do schools matter? Those who remained in school did more volunteering than those who left school, those planning to do Year 12 did more volunteering than those not planning to do it. But as well, students at government schools did less volunteering (in frequency and hours) than students in either Catholic or independent schools. Finally, those who had finished high school and had gone on to study full-time volunteered more than those who were studying part-time.

Is the choice to volunteer instrumental, in the sense of a choice made to further other personal or career goals? Boys were more likely to volunteer if they were pessimistic about their future prospects, while girls were more likely to volunteer if they were optimistic about theirs.

And finally: Four variables predicted who would begin to volunteer: gender, socioeconomic status, language and size of home community. Gender mattered - being a girl predicted the amount of volunteering, once the decision to volunteer was made. The Public Knowledge Scale was also highly gendered, and indicated that girls accessed public knowledge through both print media and cultural knowledge more than boys.

The study raised as many questions as it answered. A limitation of our data was that it did not make it possible to answer the 'why' of our questions. The study outlined the characteristics of young volunteers, but there was no question in the surveys which specifically asked them why they began, and why they carried on. Previous volunteering clearly predicted current volunteering, but we did not discover the genesis of volunteering behaviour. Another question that merits further exploration is the impact of the rising number of hours in paid employment by young people, on the propensity to volunteer. These are clearly questions for future research.

1

INTRODUCTION[1]

IS VOLUNTEERING IMPORTANT?

Throughout the developed world, volunteering is the focus of enduring interest as policy makers, community activists and social theorists seek to explain the perceived challenges to social cohesion and search for means to rekindle citizen participation in civil society. Volunteering - with its implication of altruistic service - has come to be seen as a most important instrument for the reinvention of active citizenship, although its social significance has kindled lively debate (Wilkinson and Bittman, 2002). The school systems, particularly the secondary and post-secondary systems, are looked to in new and renewed ways, for their potential as incubators of societal engagement.

Our study, conducted in 2002, used three surveys from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australia Youth Project. Two cohorts were followed from 1998 through 2000. The study's formal objective was to analyse the community participation rates of young Australians, at a younger age than studies have focused on in the past. In researching this, however, additional questions emerged, as well as the identification of further research objectives.

Keywords

These concepts form the core of the analytic framework underpinning this study.

Active Citizenship:

Active citizenship is the belief in the importance of a democratic society, and the willingness to translate that belief into action (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training, 1989:7). At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, active citizenship has been persuasively advanced as an antidote to several dimensions of the societal disaggregation which, it is argued, adversely affects advanced industrial societies. But active citizenship is most often seen as individual citizenship and focuses on the actions of the individual. Most recently Australian researchers Wilkinson and Bittman (2002) returned the debate to a focus on society as a whole and democracy as a collective process, by arguing that active citizenship, particularly in its realisation through volunteering, is both individual and collective. It is individual in that it is an assumption of responsibility in a relationship of care. It is collective in that the assumption of care has collective implications.

Passive Citizenship:

In contrast to active citizenship, passive citizenship has often been regarded as a description of collective citizenship. It is taken to mean political, social and human rights developed in a historical context and realised through the political process. The term

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[1] The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Ingrid Nielsen in the preparation of multivariate analysis. The contents of this report remain the responsibility of the authors.

'passive' reflects the idea that individuals experience these rights of citizenship, but are not called upon to engage personally in their construction or maintenance.

Volunteer:

Two major definitions are currently in use in Australia. A volunteer is "someone who, in the last 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through an organization or group" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000:3). Note that this definition excludes those who organise their volunteering individually or through family or community networks. Second, a volunteer is someone who gives time without monetary compensation, to benefit others. This definition includes volunteers who do not work through organizations.

Volunteering:

Wilson (2000: 215) writes that volunteering is "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization". Volunteering is seen as a form of active citizenship, a reinforcement of active citizenship, and a measure of the vigour of active citizenship within a society. But the current definitions of volunteering contain a contradiction. While volunteering is an activity in which time is given freely (without monetary compensation), there are situations in which the *choice* to volunteer is not entirely free. Some secondary schools give course credit for volunteering, blurring the voluntary nature of volunteering with instrumental goals. In some countries, individuals convicted of minor crimes are sentenced to a fixed number of hours of community service, introducing a measure of coercion into volunteering. In Australia, so-called mutual obligation requirements mean that many welfare recipients are obliged to work in unpaid positions to maintain their payments.

Public Knowledge:

Knowledge about social, political, economic and cultural affairs occurring in the public domain is considered an essential component of active citizenship. In this study, public knowledge is operationalised in terms of access to print media, use of the internet for information gathering, and cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge is operationalised in terms of access to museums and theatre–going, as well as use of libraries.

Social Capital:

Social capital refers to the social benefits that are gained from individual involvement in voluntary organisations, as well as more generalised engagement in the social world. These benefits include the learning of norms and values which facilitate social trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000). While Putnam views more formal organizations as central to this engagement, social capital can also be increased by less formal engagement including involvement in groups such as book clubs or self-help groups (Zajdow, 1998). Wilkinson and Bittman (2002) note the fungibility or portability of social capital so that the benefits of voluntary activity in raising social capital are also felt throughout the community in greater levels of social trust across the board.

INTERNATIONAL FINDINGS AND AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH

This study, "Active Citizenship and the Secondary School Experience: Community Participation Rates of Australian Youth", contributes to the growing, international, but controversial literature on volunteering within the context of a rapidly changing, modern capitalist society.

The project measures the rate of community participation among Australians aged 16 to 21, attempts to explain those rates, and explores the role of the school experience in the construction of active citizenship.

We begin from the belief that participation in community volunteer work, community-based activities, and the development of knowledge about society are constituents of active citizenship in Australia, as in other industrialised societies. But it is important to distinguish between passive and active citizenship. An important strand of current research (Putnam 2000; Wuthnow 1995) uses the term 'passive citizenship' to describe political, civil and social rights emerging in historical context within presently industrialised societies. These are the products of political struggle. Passive citizenship, or collective citizenship, has recently emerged as a subject of research and government policy. The term 'passive' reflects the idea that individuals experience these rights of citizenship but are not called upon to engage personally in their construction. The question of their maintenance, however, links passive citizenship to the idea of active or individual citizenship. Active or individual citizenship, on the other hand, focuses on the individual's actions to attain citizenship: her identification with, and engagement in, both the problems of her community and the collective construction of strategies and solutions to these problems. It is this process of engagement and identification which anchors the individual in society and transforms her from passive to active citizen. Volunteering, the free giving of service to others, is thus a process of engagement, and contributes to the construction of active citizenship, both for the individual and for the society as a whole.

Four characteristics of active citizenship are repeatedly mentioned by the literature. These are a mix of personal traits, values and forms of individual action: participation in family, local and wider networks, trust; pro-activity; multi-cultural values (Onyx & Bullen, 1997).

In this study, we focus on the first characteristic: participation in networks, as an indicator of active citizenship. In this context, our study is situated at the crossroads of three international research debates about volunteering, active citizenship and youth. These debates are:

- Who volunteers? Predictors for adult volunteering
- The role of social context in youth's propensity to volunteer
- The relationships between academic success, volunteering and active citizenship.

While these three debates form the intellectual and policy context within which our research is situated, it is important to note that within each debate and across all four debates, all proponents begin from the assumption that volunteering is valuable to individuals and necessary to the wider society. The question of whether volunteering has intrinsic value for social cohesion is rarely addressed within the literature, although the

question of whether 'apolitical' community involvement may reduce or substitute for political engagement, is a question addressed by American researchers (Campbell, 2000).

Wilson (2000:215) summarised the different theoretical approaches to the role of volunteering as follows:

> Theories that explain volunteering by pointing to individual attributes can be grouped into those that emphasize motives or self-understandings... and those that emphasize rational action and cost-benefit analysis...Other theories seek to complement this focus on individual level factors by pointing to the role of social resources, specifically social ties and organizational activity.

In other words, these are affective versus instrumental explanations for volunteering. Our research contributes to both approaches, while signalling the integration of the two rather than their opposition.

Who volunteers?

In the UK 48% of all men and women volunteered in 1997 (Davis-Smith 1998). In the US in 1998, the General Social Survey indicated a volunteering rate of 56% (cited in Wilson 2000:216). The Australian Bureau of Statistics Study in 2000 indicated that of the Australian civilian population 18 years and older, 32% volunteered some time in the past 12 months, up from 24% in 1995. Australian rates are therefore significantly lower than the US or the UK, but in contrast to the UK, have risen rather than declined since the mid 1990s (ABS 2000: 4).

In North America and the UK, the volunteering rates of adolescents tail off as they reach young adulthood, rise again to peak in middle age, and decline again after retirement. In the UK, the 1990s marked an increase in volunteering among the retired and a sharp decrease among the 18-24 year olds, a finding that sparked controversy. In the US, the decline among the young has not been marked. In Australia, the 1995-2000 period marked a considerable growth in volunteering among the 18-24 year olds (from 17% to 27%), and the 55-64 year olds (from 24% to 33 %) (ABS 2000: 6).

Gender matters

Internationally, women across all ages volunteer slightly more than men (Wilson 2000: 24). In the UK, the rate of volunteering was equal in 1997 (48%), marking a slight drop for women since 1991 (Davis-Smith 1998). In Australia, the aggregate gender differences were slight in 2000, 31% for men and 33% for women. But gender differences emerge more clearly depending on age and life stage, with men volunteering slightly more than women in the older age groups, and considerably less in the youngest age groups. Partnered women with children had a significantly higher volunteering rate (45%) than partnered women without dependent children (28%) (ABS 2000: 3). Moreover, the activities that men and women do are highly gendered. Women dominate the education and welfare types of voluntary work while men maintain their numbers by their sporting voluntary work.

Does socioeconomic status matter?

Internationally, the findings are that it does. In the UK, twice as many people from the highest groups volunteered, as did those from the two lowest groups. Class and

socioeconomic status are also important variables in US and Australian studies (Institute for Volunteering Research 2002; Baer, Curtis & Grabb, 2001; Wilkinson & Bittman, 2002).

The social context of volunteering

Social context may be defined broadly, to include the complex of social and economic forces which shape a young person's life chances. Or it may be defined more narrowly, to refer to ecological and demographic factors: the size of community, size and characteristics of school, structure of family, etc. In this study we use it in its narrow or ecological meaning, focusing in particular on the size of the community of residence and the socioeconomic status of students.

The role of secondary schools

The debate, particularly in the UK and the US, about the role of secondary schools in fostering volunteering, has two facets. In the first, the question is asked: do schools anchored in 'functional communities' produce students more likely to be civically engaged, as manifested by volunteering? (Coleman and Kigore1987, cited in Campbell, 2000: 642). Functional communities are defined as those which 'include people who know and interact with one another' (Campbell, 2000:645). And as research indicates, the 'functionality' of a community is not defined by religion, socioeconomic status, race, or ethnicity. US research indicates the affirmative: the more 'embedded ' the school in a functional community, the more likely the students to volunteer. This was particularly true in US Catholic schools, where, in 1996, 67% of ninth through twelfth grade students who were not required to perform community service chose to do so anyway, as compared to 48% of students in public schools (Campbell 2000:645). The American research also leads us to ask: are 'embeddedness' and 'functional community' code words for cultural homogeneity? And if so, what, in the Australian context, would embeddedness imply for schools of ethnic or racial diversity?

2

DATA, METHODS AND FINDINGS

This research has used three surveys from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) project. This project is managed jointly by the Australian Council for Educational research (ACER) and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training. LSAY contains several cohorts of Australian school students who are followed through school and into post-secondary education and the labour market. The LSAY cohorts range from those born in 1961 to 1985. Early LSAY cohorts were age-based, born in 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1975. Two later cohorts were grade-based, comprising young people who were in Year 9 in 1995 and in Year 9 in 1998. Our main aim was to identify factors that contribute to volunteering activities for these latter two LSAY cohorts: the 1995 cohort and the 1998 cohort. While some interesting findings emerged, our analysis was limited by several characteristics of the data. First, items on volunteering activity were not given to respondents at every administration of the survey, undermining the longitudinal investigation of volunteering activity. Second, two items relating to volunteering activities were given only to the 1998 cohort, thus analyses of between group differences were compromised. Appendix 2 includes the structural equation model for the 1995 cohort in the years 1999 and 2000. The use of the same cohort over two years allowed for some intragroup path analysis but since it only looks at the same cohort over two stages it was not included in the main analysis.

Volunteering from 16 to 20 years old

The study looked at two cohorts of students, those who were in Year 9 in 1995 and those in Year 9 in 1998. In the 1995 cohort, birth years fell between, and included, 1978 to 1982. About half this group were born in 1981 (56.2%), while 42.3% were born in 1980. For the 1998 cohort, birth years fell between, and included, 1980 to 1987. About half were born in 1984 (52.1%) and half were born in 1983 (43.6%).

Although it would have been desirable to investigate the volunteering activities of 16-17 year olds, 18-19 year olds and 19-20 year olds in the one cohort, only three LSAY surveys contained items relating to volunteering, two of which belonged to a single cohort, while the third belonged to a later one:

the 1998 cohort survey of 2000 (16-17 years old);

the 1995 cohort in 1999 (18-19 years old);

the 1995 cohort in 2000 (19-20 years old)[2].

[2] Ages are approximations. Not all respondents fell into these age groups, however 98.5% of respondents in the 1995 cohort were born in 1980 or 1981, so they would have been between 18 and 19 years of age in 1998 and between 19 and 20 years of age in 1999. Similarly, 95.7% of respondents in the 1998 cohort were born in 1983 or 1984, so they would have been between 16 and 17 years old in 2000.

A common set of questions related to the specific activities undertaken by volunteers in the fields of:

Meals on wheels;

St John's ambulance;

Lifeline for youth;

Reading for the blind;

Voluntary church or youth group;

Home help for the elderly/incapacitated;

Coaching/volunteer sport activity;

Volunteer child care after hours;

Other community volunteer work.

In addition, the 2000 survey of the 1998 Year 9 cohort had questions relating to voluntary work in the fields of:

Environmental activities;

Fundraising/collecting money.

Table 1 reports the percentages of the three groups undertaking these voluntary activity fields.

Table 1 Percentages of each age group undertaking each volunteering activity[a]

Activity	Age group		
	16-17[b]	18-19[c]	19-20[d]
Meals on Wheels	7.4	5.0	5.3
St John's Ambulance	4.4	7.2	4.6
Lifeline/Youthline	2.6	1.1	0.8
Reading for the Blind	2.3	1.3	0.8
Home help (elderly)	9.1	8.3	7.3
Fundraising/collecting	59.8	e	e
Environmental activities	40.5	e	e
Sport coaching	32.4	30.1	24.2
Child care	19.9	18.8	14.5
Church / youth group	14.1	18.5	16.4
Other	7.2	15.3	12.7

a: activities are not exclusive – respondents may report single activity or combination

b: 1998 cohort in 2000

c: 1995 cohort in 1999

d: 1995 cohort in 2000

e: data not collected for this ac

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Table 2 Percentages of each age group undertaking at least one volunteering activity

Age group	Volunteers (%)
16 – 17[a]	56.9[b]
18 – 19[c]	25.5
19 – 20[d]	28.8

a: 1998 cohort in 2000

b: fundraising and environmental volunteering has been included in the 1998 cohort but was not included in 1995.

c: 1995 cohort in 1999

d: 1995 cohort in 2000

To assess general levels of volunteering, we aggregated data into two groups for each volunteering group to reflect those participants who did some voluntary activity ('volunteers') and those who did none. Table 2 demonstrates that the highest level of volunteering occurred in the 16-17 years age group (56.9 %). If the two variables of fundraising and environmental activities had been excluded from the 1998 cohort, the level of volunteering among those aged 16-17 would have been 40.4%.

Four variables were found to be influential in whether participants volunteered or not. These were gender, SES, home language and size of town.

For each age category, a greater percentage of females volunteered than males. Chi-square analyses revealed that these differences were significant for each age category and show moderate association. The higher rate of volunteers amongst females is of approximately the same order (≈ 10% more) across all age groups (Table 3).

Table 3 Percentages of males and females who were volunteers by age category[a]

Age group	Males (%)	Females (%)	P value of χ^2	Cramer's V
16 – 17	49.5	59.9	<.001	.104
18 – 19	21.5	29.6	<.001	.092
19 – 20	24.4	33.1	<.001	.096

a: data for the 16-17 year olds is from the 1998 cohort; the remaining data is from the 1995 cohort

Gender also interacted with several variables to produce differences in volunteering levels. The figures show that:

- Girls were more likely to volunteer if their mothers worked; this was not the case for boys.
- Boys were more likely to volunteer if they were unhappy with future prospects, while girls volunteered more if they were optimistic about those prospects.

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- Girls were more likely to volunteer, and the amount of time they spent at volunteering increased with their public knowledge.[3] This was not the case for boys.
- Girls increased the amount of time volunteering if they left school, while boys reported higher levels while still at school.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of volunteers within each SES category. Respondents from both high and high-middle SES groups reported undertaking more volunteering activities than those from low and low-middle SES groups.

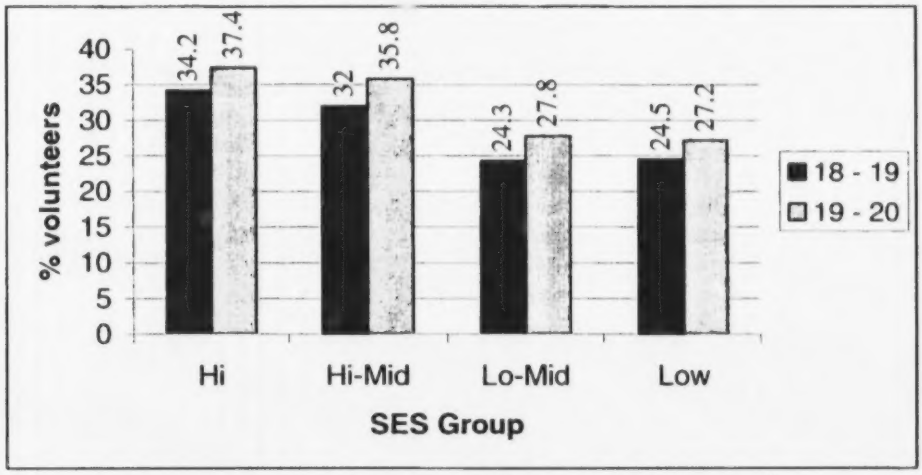

Figure 1 Percentages of volunteers within each SES category[4]

For all age groups, participants for whom English is the primary language spoken were more likely to be volunteers than those who did not speak English as their primary language (Table 4).

Table 4 Percentages of volunteers from English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds by age category[a]

Age group	English-speaking (%)	Non-English-speaking (%)	P value of χ^2	Cramer's V
16 – 17	56.5	43.4	<.001	.088
18 – 19	27.6	17.3	<.001	.095
19– 20	31.0	19.9	<.001	.099

a: data for the 16-17 year olds is from the 1998 cohort; the remaining data is from the 1995 cohort

[3] A Public Knowledge Scale was constructed using variables including visiting libraries, reading books, newspapers and magazines and using the internet. See Appendix I for the details of how this scale was constructed.

[4] Parental occupational data were collected for all the cohorts, but the variable for SES was produced from occupational data only for the 1995 Year 9 cohort (see Lamb & McKenzie, 2001). This particular variable was not constructed for the 1998 cohort.

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Table 5 Percentages of volunteers from each region by age category

Age Group	Volunteers (%)		
	Metro[a]	Regional[b]	Rural[c]
16 - 17	51.3	53.8	54.6
18 – 19	24.0	26.6	31.7
19 – 20	27.4	29.7	34.3

a: metro = >100,000 population
b: regional = 1,000 – 99,000 population
c: rural = under 1,000 population

A weak, but significant association was found between place of residence and incidence of volunteering. Volunteering was more likely in smaller, rural locations (less than 1,000 inhabitants) followed by regional locations (between 1,000 and 99,000 inhabitants) and least likely in metropolitan locations (over 100,000 inhabitants) (Table 5).

Types of volunteering activity undertaken by young people were differentiated by the place of residence. Activities such as Meals on Wheels, childcare and sports coaching were more likely to be carried out by young people from smaller towns, while Lifeline was only carried out by young people in metropolitan cities since there was no access to this activity outside of metropolitan areas. Some activities were not differentiated by the size of town at all. These included Church/Youth group, Reading for the Blind, St. John's Ambulance, and Home help for the elderly.

Characteristics of the new volunteers

The 1999 and 2000 surveys of the 1995 Year 9 cohort show an increase in volunteers (those who did any voluntary activity) from 25.5 percent in 1999 to 28.8 percent in 2000.

Seventy one percent of the cohort remained as non-volunteers, 25.5 percent remained as volunteers, 3.2 percent moved from being non-volunteers in 1999 to volunteers in 2000 and no-one who was a volunteer in 1999 became a non-volunteer in 2000. The characteristics of new volunteers were the following:

- Fifty five percent (n=78) of the new volunteers were female (females in cohort = 50%);
- Eighty nine percent (n=119) of the new volunteers spoke English as their primary home language (compared to 83% for the cohort);
- Twenty seven percent (n=28) of the new volunteers were looking for any kind of work (compared to 21% for the cohort);
- Of all the new volunteers in the field 'other community volunteer work', two largest activity groups were 40.8 percent who reported their activity as 'Red Cross/other fundraising' and 23.9 percent who reported 'local community volunteer activities'.

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The path analysis outlined in Appendix 2 shows that current volunteering is most influenced by previous volunteering, at least at age 20. Previous volunteering explained 33% of the variance for 20 year olds.

Social engagement and public knowledge

In addition to gender, the social engagement and location of young people and their families impacted on volunteering. For example, respondents volunteered more if their fathers were employed. This was the case for both young men and women. In addition public knowledge was an important component in volunteering. In relation to social engagement and public knowledge, the study found that:

- The frequency with which respondents accessed public knowledge through print media was a function of their Year 9 reading achievement quartile.
- The people from higher socioeconomic groups accessed print media more.
- The higher the SES the more frequently respondents accessed public knowledge through cultural knowledge.
- The country of birth of the respondent's mother affected the frequency with which respondents access public knowledge through print media. Those whose mothers were born overseas, but from English-speaking countries, accessed print media more than those whose mothers were born in Australia, who in turn accessed print media more than those whose mothers were born overseas in non-English-speaking countries.

Access to public knowledge, so important a factor in propensity to volunteer, also has a gendered component:

- Girls accessed public knowledge through cultural knowledge more frequently than boys.
- Girls accessed public knowledge through print media more frequently than boys.
- For girls, frequency of access to public knowledge through the print media decreased as maths achievement increased. This was not observed for boys.
- Boys from higher SES groups accessed public knowledge through the print media more frequently than their counterparts from lower SES groups.
- Those with good reading abilities were more likely to volunteer.

Do schools matter?

Attendance at school and the type of school students attended made a difference:

- Those who remained in school did more volunteering than those who left secondary studies, whether they went on to further study or not.
- Those planning to do Year 12 did more volunteering than those not planning to do it.
- Students at government schools did less volunteering (in terms of numbers of voluntary activities and volunteer hours) than students in either Catholic or independent schools.

Is the choice to volunteer instrumental or altruistic?

The affective and instrumental character of volunteering is distinguished by gender. It was found that boys who were unhappy with their employment did more volunteering than those content with their employment; for girls, satisfaction with employment was not a significant factor in volunteering. In addition, both boys and girls who were happy with their spare time volunteered more than those who were unhappy. Boys were more likely to volunteer if they were unhappy with their future prospects, while girls were more likely to volunteer if they were happy with these prospects. The study could not definitively conclude the direction of these effects but the indications are that for girls, volunteering is independent of their work intentions and seems less likely to be an instrumental activity designed to gain employment.

The path analysis of the 1995 cohort over the two years between 1999 and 2000 indicated that a number of variables were important in predicting volunteering. Two years is not a long time for this sort of analysis but an explanation of the findings would be useful here. It was hypothesised that a number of variables including reading and maths achievement, home language, gender, country of birth, socioeconomic level, and size of home town would have direct impacts on print media access, cultural knowledge and paid work. The variables were also hypothesised to have direct and indirect effects on the level of volunteering. What the research found was that three variables, reading achievement, gender and level of print media access, had direct and indirect effects on volunteering activity in 1999, while the greatest predictor of volunteering activity in one year was previous volunteering activity. A detailed account of the path analysis is presented in Appendix 2.

In summary, if active citizenship is dependent on young people's ability and desire to access public knowledge, then there are some structural variables which affect these outcomes. These include gender, parental SES, mother's country of birth and language, and reading and maths achievement.

If active citizenship is dependent on young people's involvement in voluntary work (and this is an assumption about the nature of active citizenship), then access to public knowledge and its relationship to gender are also major factors. Involvement in voluntary work also seems to help construct a brighter view of the world for young people.

3

CONCLUSION

This project aimed to clarify the relationship between certain aspects of school experience and community participation, as measured by volunteer activity, by identifying factors which were conducive to greater participation. The authors considered a number of variables which might or might not contribute to greater community participation including gender, ethnicity, reading and writing achievement, socioeconomic status and place of residence. All of these variables, in one way or another, were found to have impacted on volunteer activities. A secondary concern of the project was to devise a 'Public Knowledge' scale which aimed to measure types of activities such as reading newspapers, visiting theatres, galleries and museums, and to relate it to the other variables and volunteering activities.

The study found that four variables significantly contributed to volunteering activity. These were – gender, SES, home language and the size of town. In particular, the study found that although these four variables predicted who would begin to volunteer, being a girl predicted the amount and continuity of volunteering. The Public Knowledge Scale was also highly gendered and data indicated that girls accessed public knowledge through both print media and cultural knowledge more than boys.

The study raised as many questions as it answered. The study outlined the characteristics of young volunteers but there was no question which specifically asked them why they began, and why they carried on. Previous literature gives some indications but there is little work in this area on young people in Australia. Previous volunteering clearly predicts current volunteering, but we could not determine the genesis of volunteering behaviour. This is clearly a question for future, qualitative research.

The study could not distinguish 'voluntary' volunteer behaviour and 'mandatory' volunteer behaviour. We could not tell which students chose voluntary work as a form of altruistic behaviour from those who volunteered because of an expectation or requirement the school might have. The study was also unable to distinguish other expectations that might 'push' students towards volunteering arising from the family or community.

Volunteer activity for these young people has both instrumental and altruistic components. The Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of voluntary work (2000) found that young people tended to volunteer as a way of gaining work experience and new skills. But in this study, we found this was more likely to be true for boys than for girls. Boys tended to volunteer if the work they were doing was unsatisfactory or if they were unhappy at leaving school early. This was not the case for girls. Girls volunteered irrespective of their work engagements. Access to public knowledge was also implicated in volunteering. Girls were more likely to volunteer and their rates of volunteering increased with greater access to higher public knowledge.

Very similar rates of volunteering were found in this study as in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002) study *Measuring Australia's Progress*. The more detailed material here also adds to the existing knowledge about what factors are important in initiating and maintaining volunteering behaviour.

The habits of volunteering clearly begin at school. For the older cohorts those who volunteered had begun while still at school. Young people rarely took up voluntary work without this habit already existing within their school years. This study is clearly continuous with other Australian material on rates of volunteering. But more work needs to be done to find out the best ways that schools can introduce this activity as a viable and worthwhile one for the students. If voluntary work is an essential component of national life, which contributes to social integration and increases social networks, then young people need to be introduced to these activities as enthusiastic participants.

Future research

While several variables significantly contributed to volunteering levels in 1999 (gender, reading achievement and access to print media), the combined effects of these variables explained only 4% of the variance in volunteering. Clearly, one or more variables that are important in people's volunteering levels were not identified by this study. Such variables might include motivational variables, such as goals, individual differences in skills or interest, or further demographic variables not identified in the current study, such as the volunteering activities of family and friends. Future studies should endeavour to identify those variables that are important in the initial decisions to volunteer.

The questions relating to voluntary work and public knowledge are recent additions to the LSAY questionnaires. Future questionnaires could be widened in scope to include more types of voluntary activity. Questions should be added to find out why young people begin to volunteer and the place of such volunteering in the school curriculum. Questions relating voluntary work to paid labour could also be added. Union membership in the paid employment of young people, and the relation of that membership to propensity to volunteer, is a research path that might contribute further valuable insight. In this way, we would have a greater understanding of voluntary work in the life-cycles of young people.

Qualitative research needs to be undertaken to find out how young people experience volunteer work. There were indications in this study that voluntary work leads to greater happiness in individuals but the details of how this is experienced could be teased out further. Research indicates that social networks provide embeddedness and social integration (Wellman, 1978; Cutrona, 1996) and voluntary work is one way of providing individuals with these networks. The way this operates for young people in Australia needs much more research. This qualitative research can then combine with the work on civic participation to give policy makers and researchers a clearer picture of the sources of social engagement among adolescents.

Appendix 1

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE SCALE (PKS)

The four variables examined in the development of the PKS were:

"In your spare time, outside study or work, how often do you....."

1. Go to the library
2. Read books
3. Read newspapers or magazines
4. Use the Internet

The structure of these variables was assessed through principal components analysis (PCA).

Data for at least one variable was missing on 4,830 cases and was eliminated from the analysis. All variables were examined for univariate outliers (>3z). There were 199 univariate outliers and these cases were recoded back to 3z.

Linearity was assessed through scatterplots of all variable pairs. Some bands of linearity were present, although these were not as strong as desired. Inspection of a correlation matrix (Table 6) revealed significant correlations throughout, however, the effect sizes were small when detracted from the factorability of these data.

Table 6 Correlation matrix of variables to be submitted to PCA for the PKS

	Go to the Library	Read books	Use the Internet	Read the Newspaper
Go to the Library	1.000			
Read books	.394**	1.000		
Use the Internet	.282**	.171**	1.000	
Read the Newspaper	.050**	.090**	.052**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PCA of the items was undertaken through SPSS Version 10.2. While the observed correlations were lower than desired, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy approached .60 (.58) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (χ^2_6 = 2,331.94, p<.001). The percentages of variance explained in each item of the four-variable model ranged from .005% (Newspaper) to 63% (Go to the Library). Since variables with extracted communalities less than 10% are unlikely to load on a component, the Newspaper item was discarded and the analysis re-run.

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Table 7 Component loadings on the one-component Public Knowledge Scale

PKS Item	Component loading
Go to the Library	.81
Read books	.74
Use the Internet	.62
M	9.55
SD	4.37
α	.54

Note: Respondents were asked "In your spare time, outside study or work, how often do you..." from 1 (at least once a week) to 6 (never).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy again approached .60 (.58) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity remained significant (χ^2_6 = 2,247.89, p<.001). The percentages of variance explained in each item for the three-variable model ranged from .38 (Use the Internet) to .65 (Go to the Library). Using Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues >1.00, one component was extracted which explained 52.48% of the total variance. Item loadings on this component ranged from .62 to .81 (Table 7).

The scale was submitted to reliability analyses under SPSS Version 10.2. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from .27 to .44. Cronbach's alpha was .54. Although lower than desired, Cronbach's alpha was acceptable relative to item numbers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Since the factor structure is clear and the combined items explain over 50% of the variance, it is suggested that further items are developed for future administrations to enhance the internal consistency of the scale.

An independent samples t-test was performed to assess gender differences on the PKS. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was significant (F = 33.52, p <.001) indicating heterogeneity of the two group variances. A t-test correcting for group heterogeneity was significant (t = 11.07, p <.001). There was a mean difference of 1.03 between scores for males and females on the PKS. Males reported higher scores than females on the PKS (Males: M = 10.09, SD = 4.46: Females: M = 9.06, SD = 4.42). The 95% confidence intervals of this difference were narrow (.85 to 1.21), indicating that this difference is likely to be robust in future samples.

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Appendix 2

PATHWAYS TO VOLUNTEERING

This analysis utilized structural equation modeling to assess the contributions to volunteering in 1999 and 2000 (by the 1995 cohort) of several demographic variables, school achievement and access to Print Media and Cultural Knowledge.

The hypothesized model (Figure 2) explained 33% of the variance in volunteering activity in 2000, however the fit of the data to the model was poor (χ^2_{51} = 465.71, p <.000; CMIN/DF = 9.13; Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = .85; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .29; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .53). Model respecifications were examined and these modifications allowed gender to load directly onto 1999 volunteering activity. In addition 21 paths were progressively removed.

The final model provided a good fit of the data to the model (χ^2_8 = 7.92, p <.441; CMIN/DF = 0.99; AGFI = .99; TLI = .99; CFI = .99). Thirty-three percent of the variance was explained in 2000 volunteering activity. However, only 4% of the variance was explained in 1999 volunteering activity (see Figure 3), suggesting that while the model was helpful in explaining the volunteering behaviour of those who had volunteered before, it was not helpful in explaining the factors that prompted participants to volunteer in the first place.

Notably, there was no significant contribution to the model of several of the demographic variables proposed in the literature to affect volunteering (i.e. size of home town, country of birth, SES, amount per week earned in paid work), nor of prior mathematics achievement, nor the Cultural Knowledge component of public knowledge. It is unclear why these variables failed to have an impact on volunteering in the current sample. It might be that these variables are simply less salient in the Australian context than they are overseas.

Three variables each had a direct impact on the level of Print Media accessed in 1999 (gender (β = -.23); home language (β = -.09); prior reading achievement (β = -.20)).

The level of Print Media accessed in 1999 had a direct impact on the number of volunteering activities undertaken in 1999 (β = -.14), as did gender (β = .10).

The number of volunteering activities undertaken in 2000 was directly influenced by the number of volunteering activities undertaken in 1999 (β = .58).

There were also a number of indirect effects observed in the final model, although none of these exceeded a beta weight of .09.

While some demographic (gender and home language), past achievement (reading) and public knowledge (Print Media) variables explained a small amount of variance (4%) in the level of volunteering activity, the greatest single predictor of future volunteering level (i.e., 2000) was, not surprisingly, past volunteering level (i.e., 1999) (β = .58). Thirty-three percent of the variance in 2000 volunteering levels was explained by 1999 volunteering levels, which is a substantial amount for a single variable. Clearly though, further variables that have not been identified in this study impact both on initial volunteering and subsequent volunteering. Such variables might include personality factors, such as extroversion, or further demographic variables such as the volunteering behaviours of friends, siblings or parents.

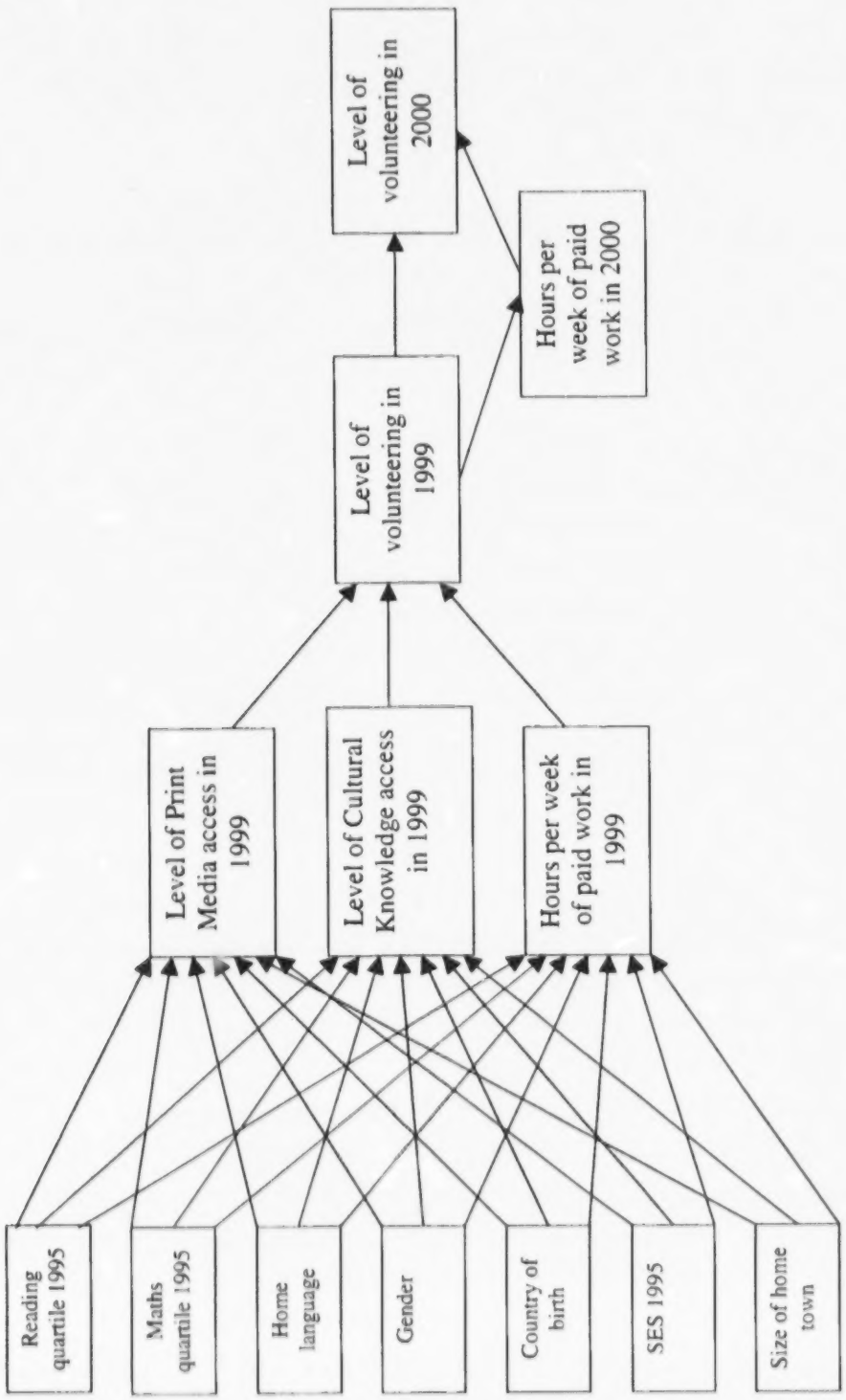
Level of volunteering in 2000
Hours per week of paid work in 2000
Level of volunteering in 1999
Level of Print Media access in 1999
Level of Cultural Knowledge access in 1999
Hours per week of paid work in 1999
Reading quartile 1995
Maths quartile 1995
Home language
Gender
Country of birth
SES 1995
Size of home town

Figure 2 Hypothesized causal model of volunteering activity in 1999 and 2000

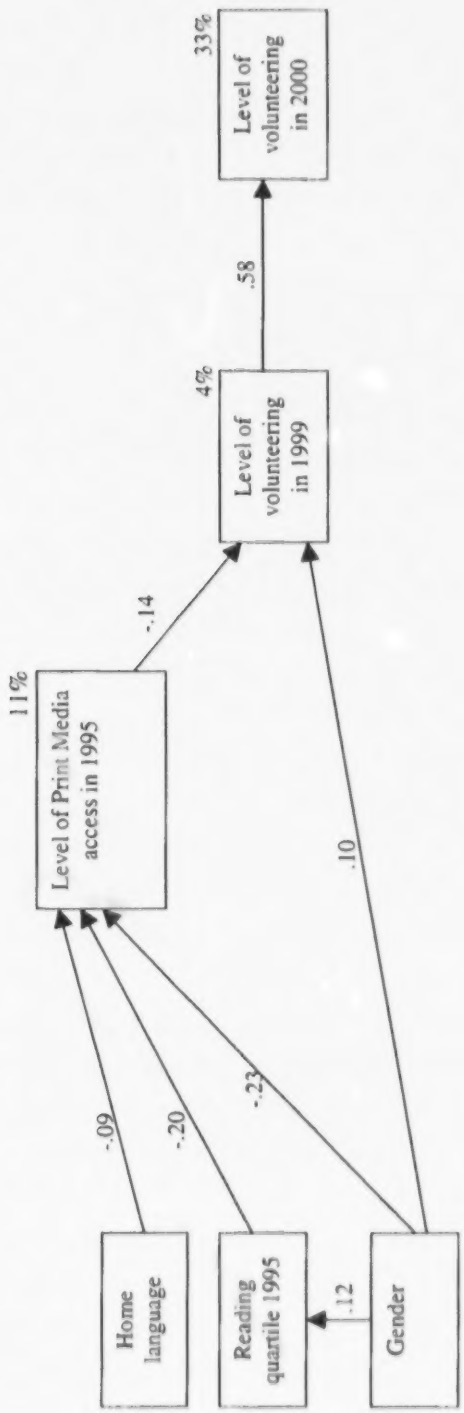

Figure 3 Final model of volunteering activity in 1999 and 2000 with beta weights and squared multiple correlations

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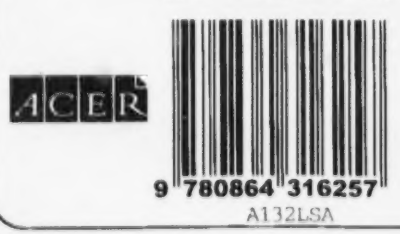

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